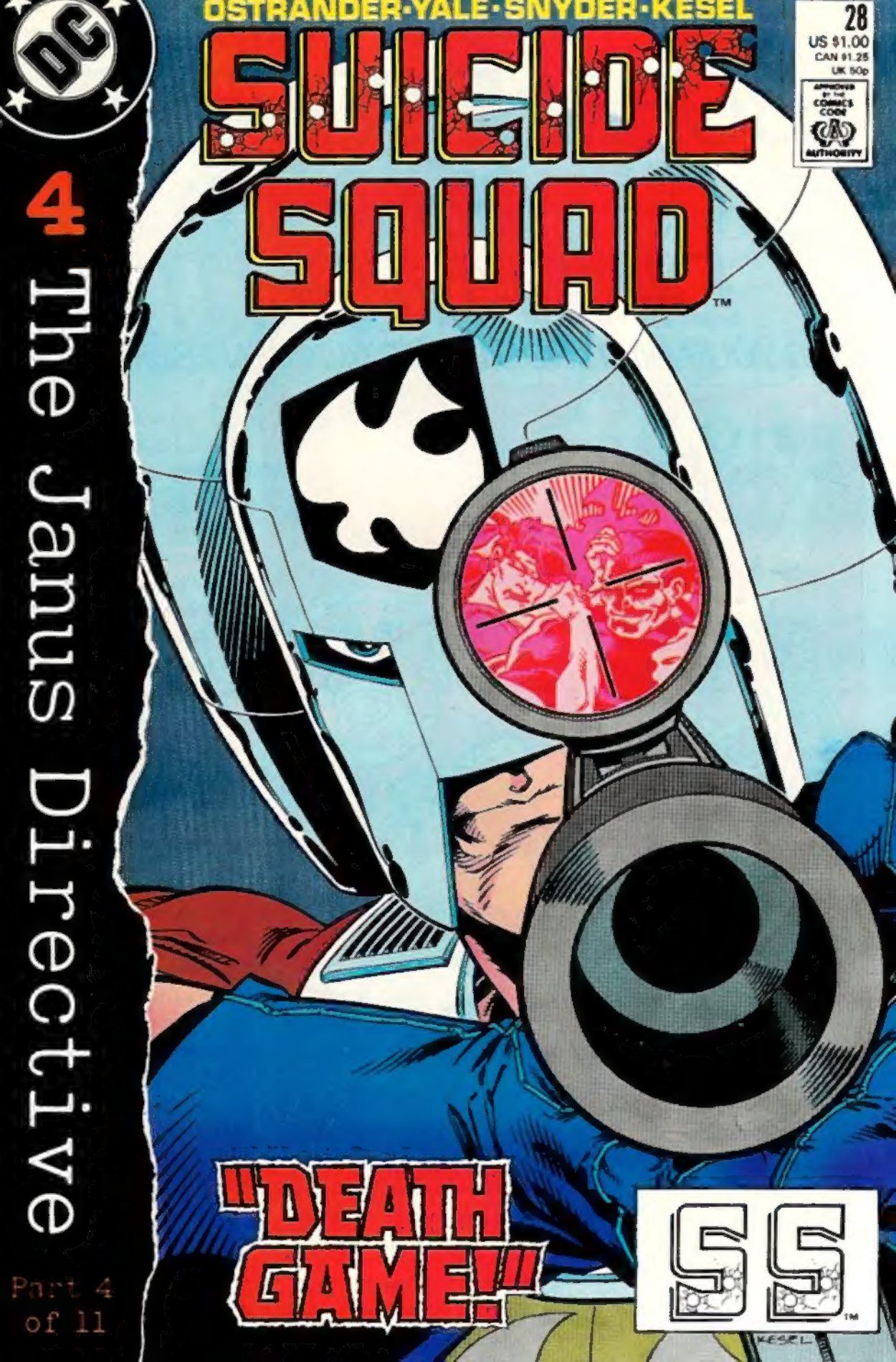
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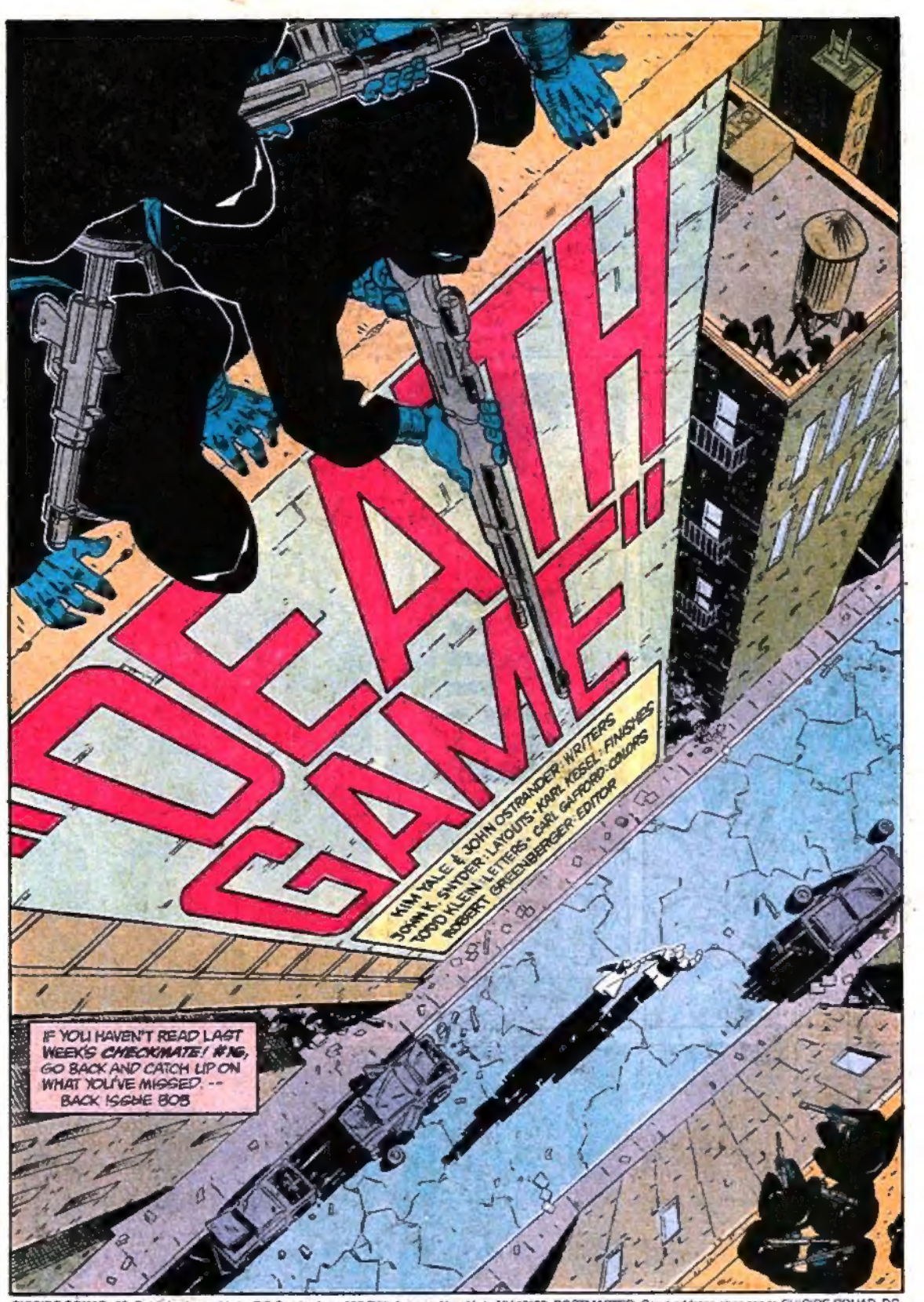

SUICIDE SQUAD 28 Published monthly by DC Comics Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SUICIDE SQUAD, DC Comics Subscriptions, P.O. Box 0528, Baldwin, NY 11510. Annual subscription rate $12.00, Canada $17.00, all other foreign $24.00. U.S. funds only. Copyright © 1989 DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. All characters featured in this issue and distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of DC Comics Inc. Advertising Representative: Print Advertising Representatives, 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017 (212) 391-1400. Printed in U.S.A.
6-47/8
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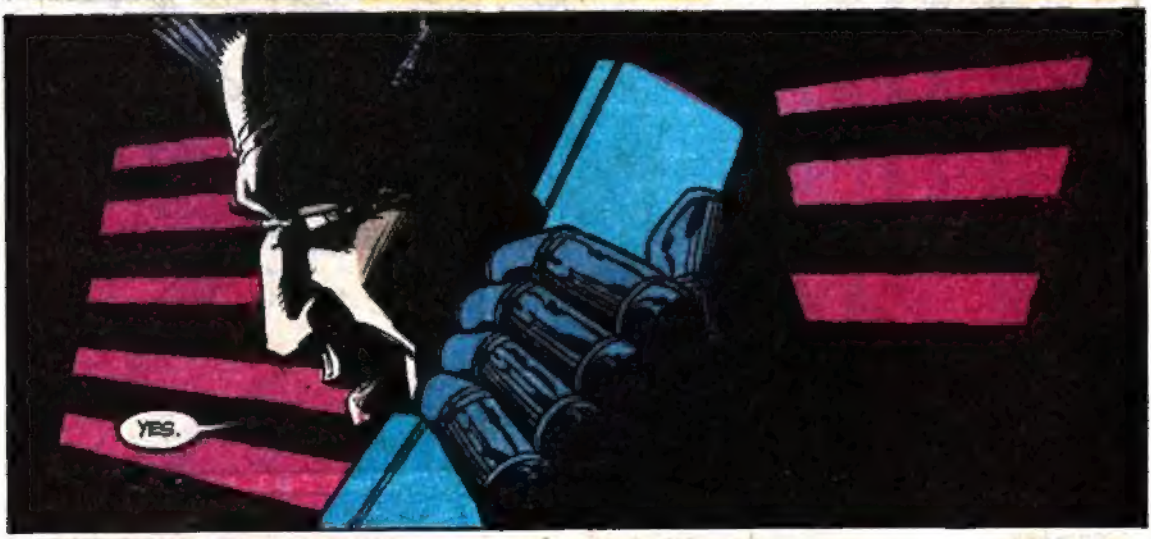
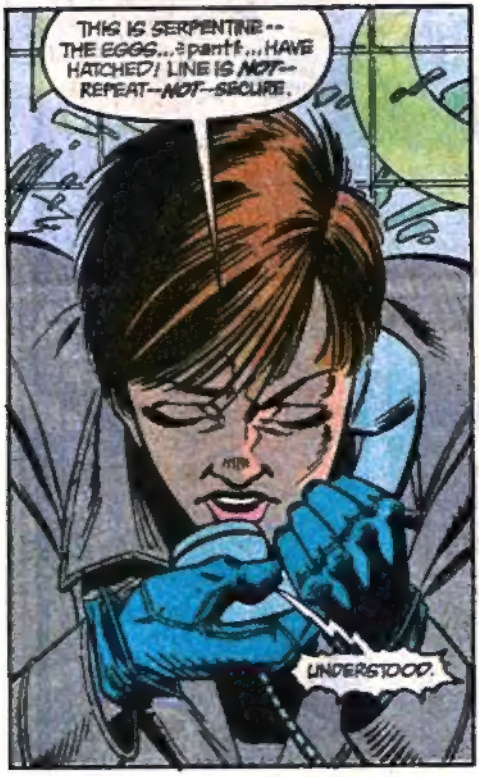
YOU SEE THEM?
YES. WE'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE IT, ARE WE?
WE'VE GOT TO GET...$pant$ WORD IN.

GOTTA USE... $pant$...PHONE NUMBER.
SPRANG
SPRING
WON'T GIVE... $pant$...US MUCH... $pant$...CHANCE.

2


YES.


THIS IS SERPENTINE -- THE EGGS...:pant!:...HAVE HATCHED! LINE IS NOT-- REPEAT--NOT--SECURE.
UNDERSTOOD.

THE WORD YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IS ANACONDA.

ANACONDA UNDERSTOOD. CAN WE ASSIST YOU?

CHERIE? ARE YOU THERE?

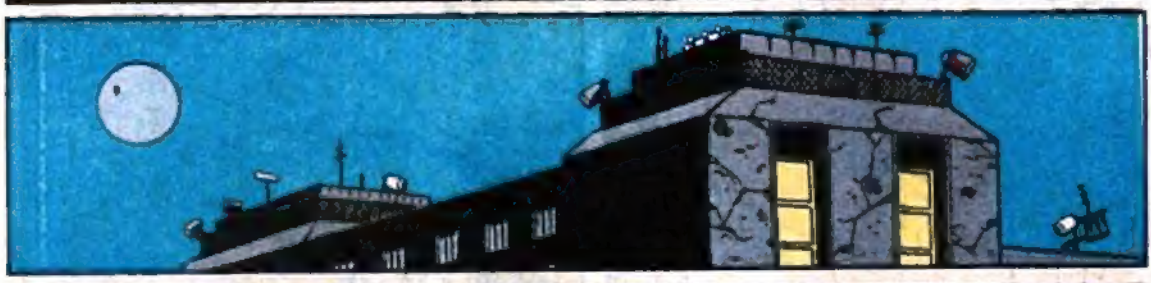
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

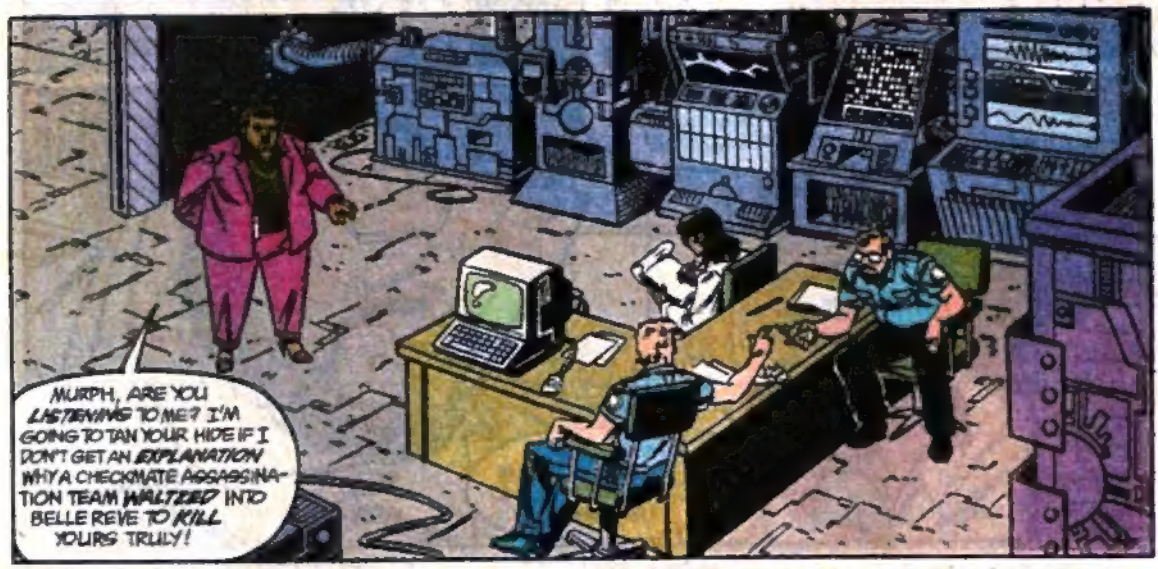
CHERIE-- ARE YOU THERE?

ARGGH!

JOHN!-- UNHG!S
CHERIE! JOHN!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

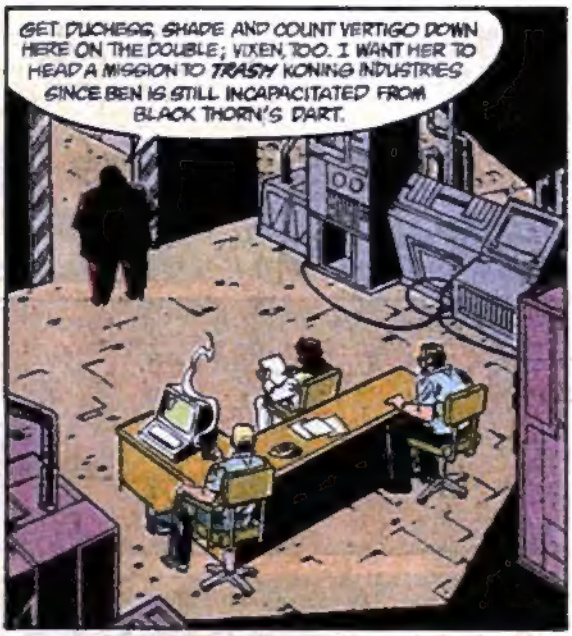



MURPH, ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME? I'M GOING TO TAN YOUR HIDE IF I DON'T GET AN EXPLANATION WHY A CHECKMATE ASSASSINATION TEAM WALTZED INTO BELLE REVE TO KILL YOURS TRULY!

HEY--BELLE REVE'S SECURITY WAS DESIGNED TO KEEP PEOPLE FROM GETTING OUT, NOT GETTING IN--CAPEESH? STANDING ORDERS FORMULATED WHEN THIS FACILITY WAS MASQUERADING AS A FEDERAL PRISON.

STANDING ORDERS? WHOSE STANDING ORDERS?!
YOURS.

I DON'T RECALL ANYTHING ABOUT THOSE ORDERS.
BEEP BEEP


GET DUCHESS, SHADE AND COUNT VERTIGO DOWN HERE ON THE DOUBLE; VIXEN, TOO. I WANT HER TO HEAD A MISSION TO TRASH KONING INDUSTRIES SINCE BEN IS STILL INCAPACITATED FROM BLACK THORN'S DART.

SO, ARE YOU GOING TO PLAY FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE TO BEN WHILE HE RECOVERS?
WHY WASTE THE TIME--LAST TIME I DID THAT IT HAD NO LASTING EFFECT.

C'MON, FLO, GIVE IT A SHOT. I SPEAK FROM EXPERIENCE--IT WORKED WITH MY FOURTH WIFE.

YOU TOLD ME THAT STORY BEFORE ABOUT YOUR SECOND WIFE!
IT WAS THE SAME WOMAN--I MARRIED HER TWICE.

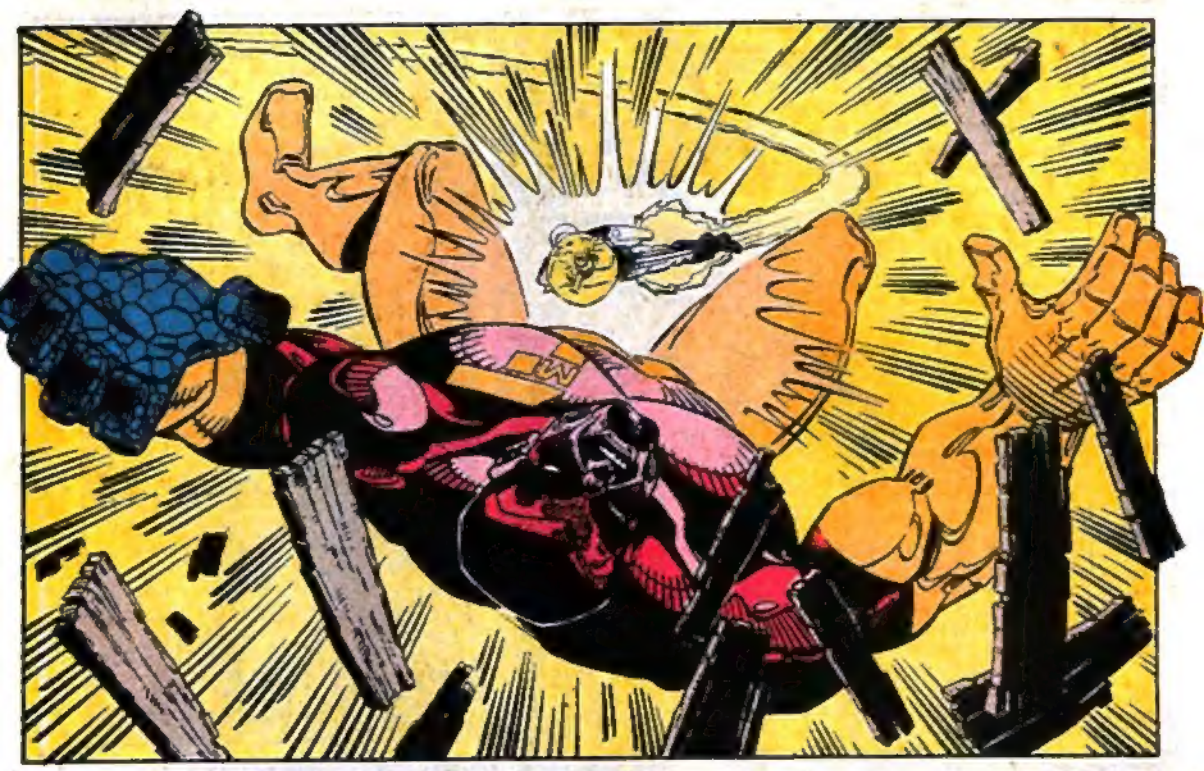
WHERE'S THE MEDUSA MASK, MURPH?
LOCKED AWAY IN SECURITY. WHY?
GO GET IT FOR ME AND TELL YEAGER TO GET A TRANSPORT READY FOR MY IMMEDIATE DEPARTURE.

ARE YOU CRAZY? THERE'S NO GUARANTEEING YOUR SAFETY IF YOU WALK OUT OF BELLE REVE!
THIS ISN'T A ROUNDTABLE DEBATE, MURPH; THOSE ARE ORDERS! NOW MOVE IT!

YOU ASSEMBLED THAT TEAM YET?
UH-- NO...
YOU WAITING FOR SOME SPECIAL OCCASION, ECONOMOS?

HOP TO IT, THEN. CHECKMATE TOOK MEGALA ALIVE. THE SQUAD'S GOING TO RECTIFY THAT AND TAKE OUT ANYONE ELSE WHO GETS IN THE WAY OF THEIR MISSION.

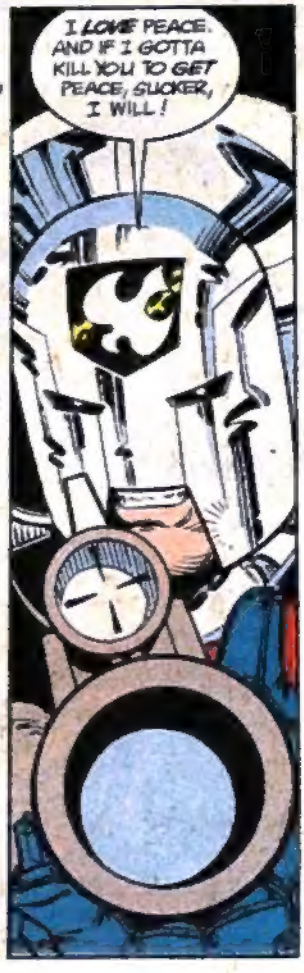
KONING INDUSTRIES, TWO HOURS LATER.
KONING
KOPP!
KOPP!
GOOD LORD!



SOMEBODY'S SENT ME A PLANMATE. GOODY, GOODY!

THRUSH

SWOOSHHH!!


I LOVE PEACE. AND IF I GOTTA KILL YOU TO GET PEACE, SUCKER, I WILL!

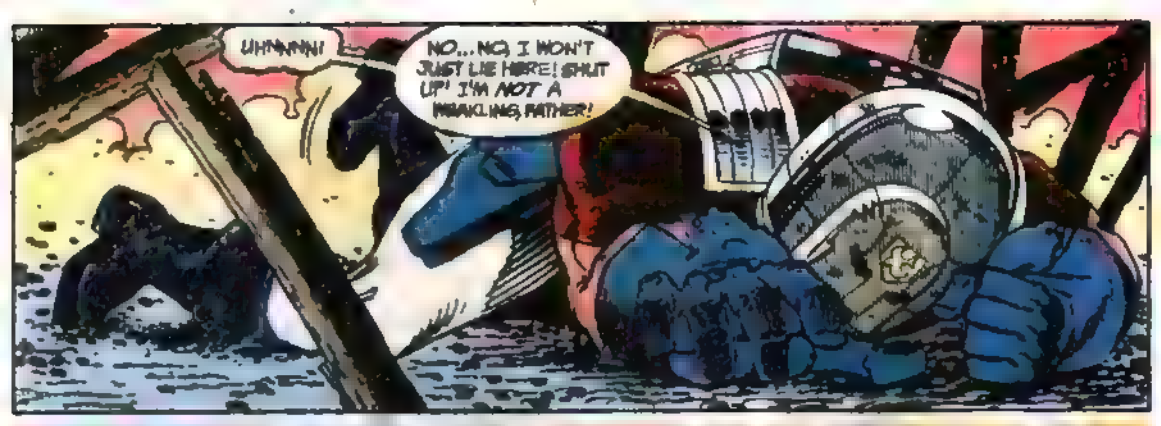
THIS TEARS IT, D'ABO! CHECKMATE'S COVER IS BLOWN, THANKS TO YOUR TRIGGER-HAPPY PATIENT! BET THE WASHINGTON POST PHOTOGRAPHER'S OUT THERE RIGHT NOW, GETTING FRONT-PAGE PICTURES OF FORCE AND PEACEMAKER!
PART OF HIS PSYCHOSIS IS THAT ONLY HE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE. WOULD YOU TRY TO STOP HIM IN THAT FRAME OF MIND?
VAL, IT'S IMPERATIVE YOU REACH ELLING! BOTH CHECKMATE AND THE ATOM PROTECT HAVE BEEN SET UP!
HARDY, SINCE CHECKMATE TRIED TO KILL THE GENERAL, HE'S NOT GOING TO BE VERY DISPOSED TO TALKING.
CONVINCE HIM, BY WHATEVER MEANS POSSIBLE AND DON'T GIVE HIM ANY OTHER OPTIONS! DO IT!
NOTHING LIKE AN INTERESTING CHALLENGE, HARDY. ALL RIGHT.

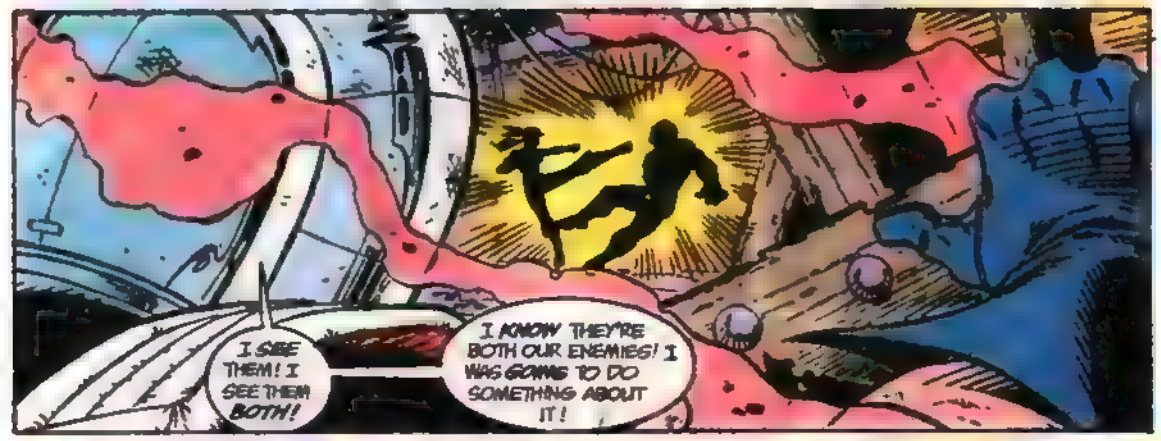
I THINK WE GOT TROUBLE.
OF COURSE WE GOT TROUBLE! UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE CENTURY, HARVEY!
WE GOT WORSE TROUBLE THAN YOU KNOW. LOOK AT WHO JUST SHOWED!
SIGH NOW I KNOW HOW ERROL FLYNN FELT IN THEY DIED WITH THEIR BOOTS ON.

VERTIGO! SHADE! TAKE OUT PEACEMAKER!
DUCHESS! TACKLE MAJOR FORCE!
FRIEND OR FOE?
OH, FOE
DEFINITELY FOE
EEEGARRH!
WULF! FATHER! NO!
KRAK!

MEL-LOOOO, BAYYYY-BEE!
WANTA MIX IT UP? FINE BY ME. I DON'T MIND HITTING BROADS. GIMMIE YER BEST SHOT.
BOOW! BOOW! BOOW!
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
NOW IT'S MY SHOT.
KRAK!
WHUMP!
WHAM!
GUESS YER FALLING FOR ME, HUH, GIRLIE?

HAH! I FINALLY FOUND SOMEONE WHO WON'T BREAK THE FIRST TIME I HIT HIM!
OKAY, WORK -LET'S MATCH FISTS!
THE REST OF YOU GET INSIDE AND DO WHAT WE CAME FOR!
THIS ONE IS MY MEAT!
KRAK!
WE'LL HAVE TO SEPARATE. TRASH THE COMMAND CENTER, TRASH THE COMMUNICATIONS CENTER, GRAB MEGALA-- WHOEVER FINDS HIM FIRST.
OUR ORDERS WERE TO KILL MEGALA.
THEY'RE IN. TIME TO GET OUT.
TELL SECURITY TO GRAB MEGALA AND LET'S BREAK FOR THE SAFE HOUSE.
IF THE WALL WANTS MEGALA DEAD, SHE CAN PULL THE TRIGGER!
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, WE GRAB HIM AND TAKE HIM BACK. AND THOSE ARE MY ORDERS!


UHNNNN!
NO... NO, I WON'T JUST LIE HERE! SHUT UP! I'M NOT A WRAKLING, FATHER!

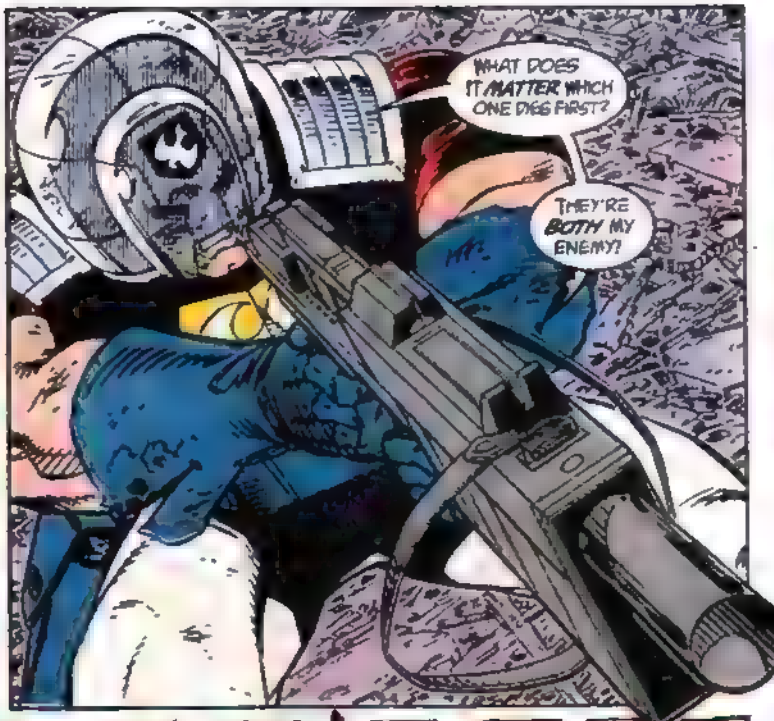

I SEE THEM! I SEE THEM BOTH!
I KNOW THEY'RE BOTH OUR ENEMIES! I WAS GOING TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

NO, NOT WITH MY TEETH!
LET ME JUST REACH THE GUN AND I'LL SHOW YOU!

OKAY, LET'S GET HIM OVER TO HATCH 20.
IT WON'T DO ANY GOOD, YOU KNOW. THEY'LL JUST FIND ME AGAIN AND THERE'LL BE MORE BLOODSHED!
LET ME GO AND I'LL TRY TO END THIS SITUATION!

BY ALL MEANS, GENTLEMEN-- RELEASE THE SCIENTIST.
I WILL END THE BLOODSHED-- BY SHEDDING HIS!

YOU TREMBLE SO, SCIENTIST. ARE YOU THAT AFRAID OF DEATH OR DO YOU—?

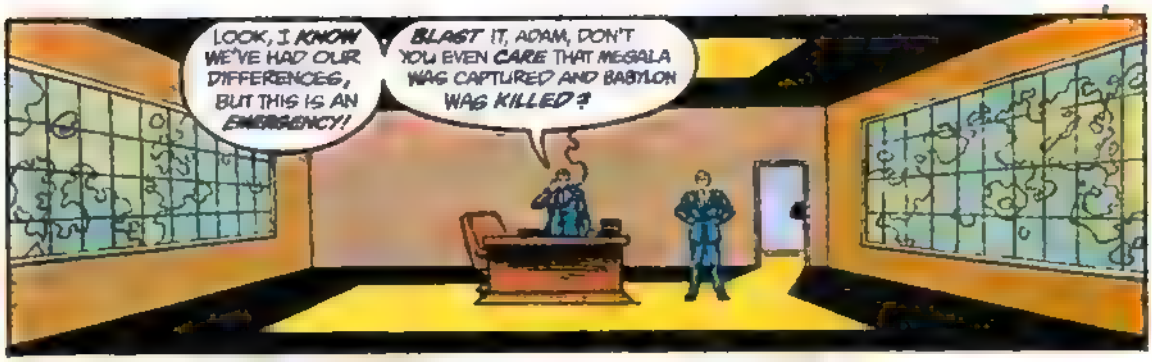

WHAT DOES IT MATTER WHICH ONE DIES FIRST?
THEY'RE BOTH MY ENEMY!

BULL-DOGGING

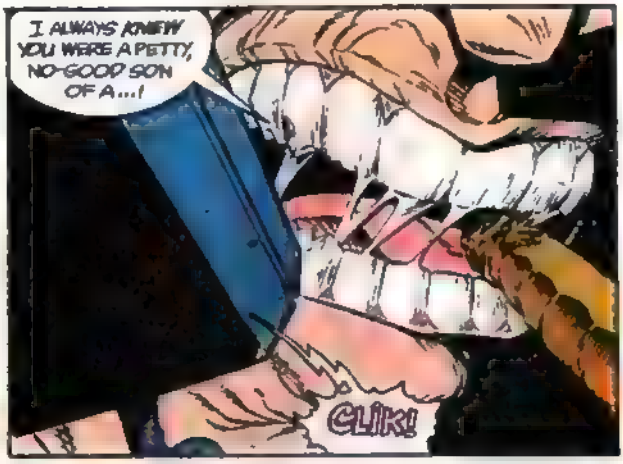
OOF!
WHAT WAS IN THAT LAST PUNCH, BABY?
THAT... WASN'T ME.

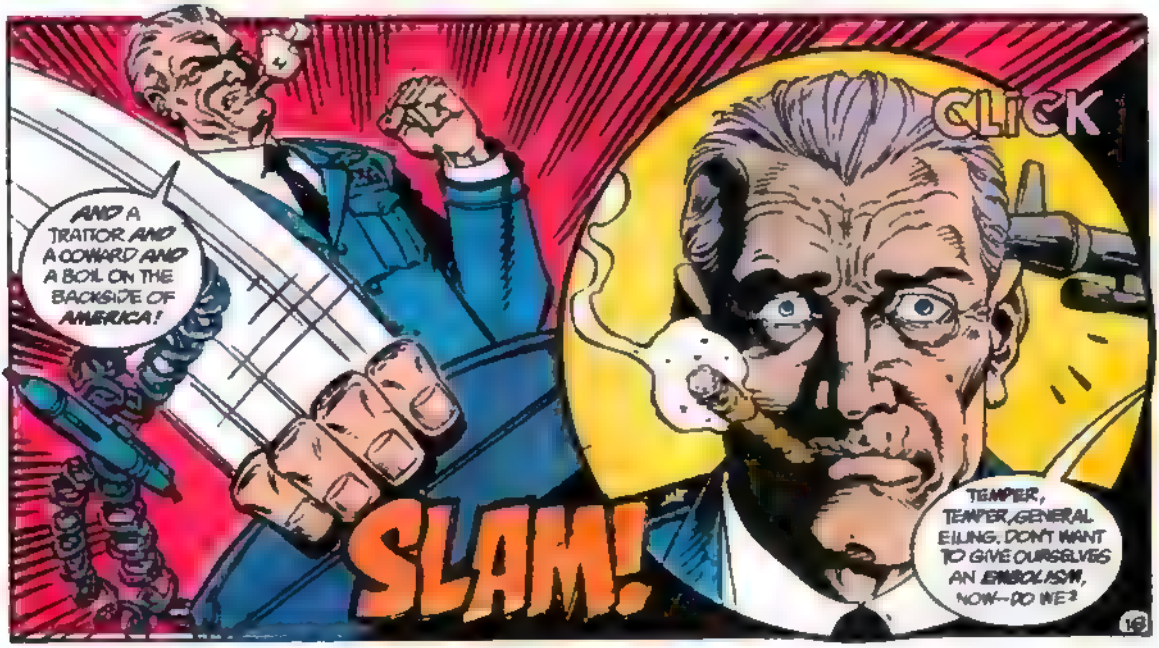
THIS IS!
KRAK!

DUCHESS! GIVE US A HAND! VERTIGO'S HURT PRETTY BAD!
...BLEW UP... HE JUST BLEW UP...
NICE EXPLOSION. WHAT DID YOU USE?
MEGALA BLEW UP. I CAME AROUND THE CORNER AS IT HAPPENED AND CAUGHT VERTIGO IN THE VENT'S FORCE FIELD...
...OR HE WOULD'VE BEEN DEAD AS WELL.
WHATEVER THAT THING WAS -- IT WASN'T THE REAL MEGALA. WE'D BETTER GET BACK TO BELLE REVE AND LET THEM KNOW.
WHAT WAS IT?
LOIS LANE, DAILY PLANET. WHAT WAS THE SUICIDE SQUAD AND MAJOR FORCE DOING ATTACKING A PRIVATE INDUSTRY HERE IN VIRGINIA? WHO IS MEGALA AND WHAT CAUSED THE EXPLOSION? JUST WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
NO COMMENT. LET'S GO, PEOPLE.
RUN, HIDE, STONEWALL ALL YOU WANT.
WHATEVER IS GOING ON HERE IS BAD -- AND I'M GOING TO FIND OUT JUST WHAT IT IS!
17


LOOK, I KNOW WE'VE HAD OUR DIFFERENCES, BUT THIS IS AN EMERGENCY!
BLAST IT, ADAM, DON'T YOU EVEN CARE THAT MEGALA WAS CAPTURED AND BABYLON WAS KILLED?

DON'T JERK MY CHAIN, GENERAL I'VE GOT A TELEVISION SET. YOU'VE ALREADY SENT MAJOR FORCE TO DEAL WITH IT.
YOU'VE DONE ALL YOU COULD TO MAKE MY LIFE HELL AND NOW YOU WANT ME TO HELP COVER YOUR BUTT. FORGET IT.

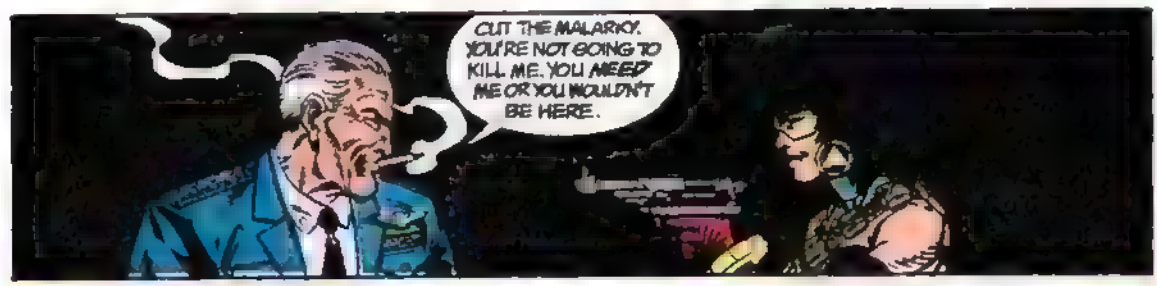

I ALWAYS KNEW YOU WERE A PETTY, NO-GOOD SON OF A...!
CLIK!

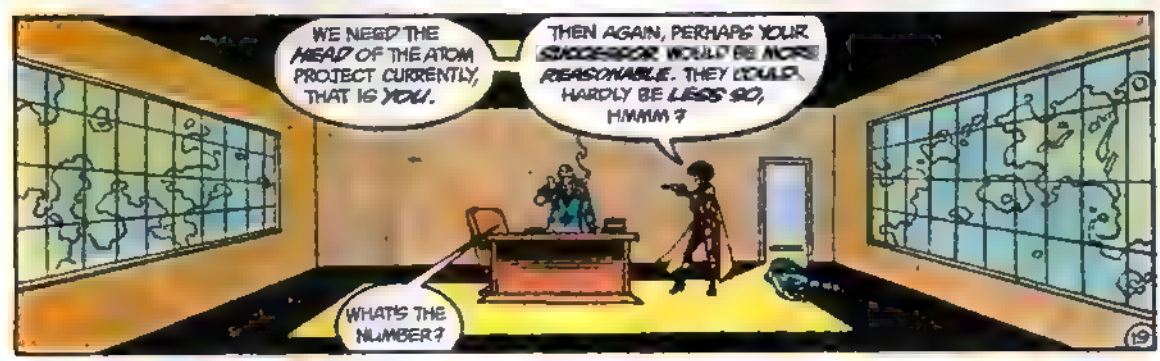

AND A TRAITOR AND A COWARD AND A BOIL ON THE BACKSIDE OF AMERICA!
CLICK
SLAM!
TEMPER, TEMPER, GENERAL ELLING. DON'T WANT TO GIVE OURSELVES AN EMBOLISM, NOW—DO WE?

WHO IS THIS?
BLACK THORN YOU REMEMBER MY FILE, GENERAL?

YOU'RE THE HIT WOMAN WHOSE BEEN SHOOTING UP MANHATTEN.
LAST I HEARD YOU WERE ANNOYING STEIN AND THOSE CHECKMATE GUYS— WHAT'S THE MATTER. THEY GET WISE TO YOU?

THAT'S THE PAST. THE PRESENT IS WHAT MUST CONCERN YOU, GENERAL.
YOU'RE GOING TO PICK UP THE PHONE, CALL THE NUMBER I GIVE YOU, AND TALK TO THE PEOPLE WHO ANSWER OR I'LL SPRAY YOUR BRAINS OVER THE CONSOLE

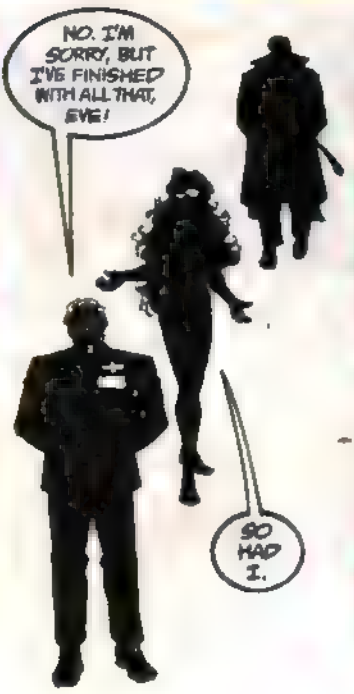

CUT THE MALARKY. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO KILL ME. YOU NEED ME OR YOU WOULDN'T BE HERE.

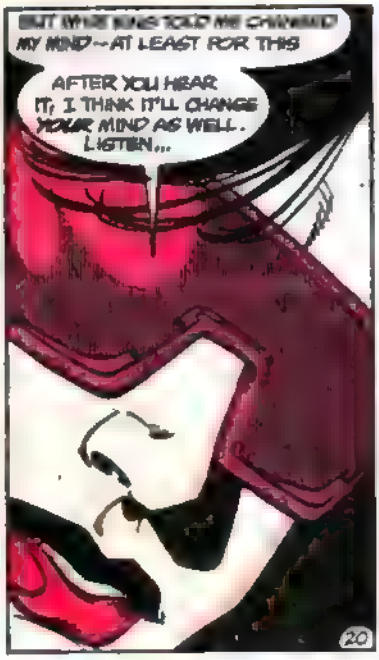

WE NEED THE HEAD OF THE ATOM PROJECT CURRENTLY, THAT IS YOU.
THEN AGAIN, PERHAPS YOUR SUCCESSOR WOULD BE MORE REASONABLE. THEY COULD HARDLY BE LESS SO, HMMM?
WHAT'S THE NUMBER?

I WISH I FELT BETTER ABOUT THIS. ELLING CAN ROT IN HELL FOR ALL I CARE, BUT MEGALA... BABYLON...
I'VE GOT MY HANDS FULL RIGHT NOW, THOUGH, JUST DEALING WITH BREAKING THE NEWS OF MY IDENTITY TO MY FAMILY.
CAPTAIN?
YOU!!!

ME.
I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO AN OLD FRIEND OF MINE, CAPTAIN. THIS IS KING FARADAY. DON'T WORRY HE'S ALREADY HAD ALL THE CLEARANCES TO KNOW ABOUT YOU.

WHAT IS ALL THIS, EVE?
IT'S CALLED THE JANUS DIRECTIVE--
--AND IT INVOLVES ALL THE METAHUMAN INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES, THE ATOM PROJECT AND THE SQUAD AMONG THEM.


NO. I'M SORRY, BUT I'VE FINISHED WITH ALL THAT, EVE!
SO HAD I.


BUT WHAT KING TOLD ME CHANGED MY MIND--AT LEAST FOR THIS
AFTER YOU HEAR IT, I THINK IT'LL CHANGE YOUR MIND AS WELL. LISTEN...

OOOOHHH...
J-JOHNN...?
HERE... I'M HERE... IT'S OKAY...
I BEG TO DIFFER. IT ISSSS HARDLY "OKAY".
I HAVE WORKED FOR YEARSSSS ON THE JANUSSSS DIRECTIVE -- AN OPERATION YOU WOULD COMPRO-MISSSE.
THAT I WILL NOT ENDURE.

THE JANUS DIRECTIVE CONTINUES *NEXT WEEK* IN *MANHUNTER #44* AND *CHECKMATE! #17* AND *FIRESTORM #86!* AND THEN JOIN US HERE IN *TWO WEEKS* AS CHECKMATE, PEACEMAKER, MAJOR FORCE, AND BLACK THORN LAUNCH AN ATTACK ON BELLE REVE IN *SUICIDE SQUAD #29!*

SUICIDE NOTES

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L-3669

Dear Bob,

"Weird War Tales" was not the best SUICIDE SQUAD tale ever, but it did have a lot of things going for it. I didn't particularly care for the flashbacks, but that's only because I don't think INVASION!'s been that great.

Waller's arguing with hallucinations is really getting out of hand; she'd best seek some professional help before she has a breakdown. Still, her conversation with "Floyd" helped rectify my negative feelings about last issue. I had thought it was a cop-out for you to have Floyd survive the shootout, but "his" remark that "I tried (to get killed), didn't I?" changed my mind; it is completely appropriate that someone whose life has gone as badly as Floyd's cannot even succeed at dying. Sad, really.

The Australian flashback had me hoping (finally) you would allow Captain Boomerang to stop being the Squad's goat, but nooo! Isn't it about time to cut him some slack?

I hear Grant Miehn will be guest pencilling #25, meaning Luke will have drawn 24 consecutive issues, plus DEADSHOT, without SS ever being late (to my recollection); that's quite a feat these days, when most series have a guest artist every four issues and are usually three weeks late despite that fact. Give the man a raise, Bob!

D. Sluss
342 Gallucci Hall
200 East Exchange
Akron, OH 44304

*****

Dear John and Kim,

I have just got through reading SUICIDE SQUAD #23 and although it wasn't as good as some issues you've done, it was pretty good.

I really enjoyed the debriefing on pages 5 to 15. In these pages Vixen shows there's more to her than a lot of people thought (me being one of them). I mean, I had never seen her cut loose like she did in this issue; not even in JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #252-254 when they were fighting Despero.

I also liked the scene with Duchess. She's one of the best fighters I've ever seen. She almost puts Deadshot to shame. But not quite.

I also liked seeing the New Guardians and Soyuz in this issue. Are there any plans for a team-up with either of these teams?

I was hoping to see more of Tom's team in this issue, but what I did get to see of his team I really enjoyed. If I were Captain Boomerang and aliens were invading Australia, I'd take it personal, too.

Now to the new members that're coming to the Squad. First you've got Dr. Light. I always liked him as a member of the Fearsome Five (any chance of Psimon, Mammoth, Gizmo, or Shimmer joining for a few issues?); don't you dare kill him off. Next, there's Punch and Jewelee. I know nothing at all about them, so I'm really looking forward to seeing them in the Squad. Then there's Count Vertigo. The first time I ever saw him was in MANHUNTER #7 and if he can't do better in the Squad than he did in that issue, they don't need him. And last of all there's Ravan. I'm *really* looking forward to seeing him in the Squad. After all, *he did* swear to kill Ben in issue #2, did he not? Now, do you know who along with the villains that are joining, would make the Squad complete? The Trickster and the Rainbow Raider.

Marson Fedrick
PO Box 514
Ellisville, MS 39437

Gee, Marson, that's another vote for the Trickster, so let's see what we can do about that. I'm not a big Rainbow Raider fan, however, so let's forget about him.

Psimon died quite some time back so it'll be hard to use him here (although with John and Kim, nothing's impossible) but the others are all possibilities. And no, we are not planning any team-ups with other super-teams at present.

*****

Dear Editor,

Issue #23 was more testimony to this comic book's immensely talented team.

Many crossover stories either read well as crossovers, or are good in and of themselves, but fail to add much to the major crossover comic. "Weird War Tales" managed to do both.

The actual war scenes were well developed, and it was refreshing to see Captain Boomerang actually getting commended, albeit briefly, by Nemesis. Vixen also shone, and though I've never particularly liked her, I found Luke and Kari's superimposition of her animal powers added to her menace. She rarely seemed like the bloodthirsty type before, no matter how many times she growled.

Framing the war scenes with Bronze Tiger's debriefing and Nemesis's bedside chat with a far more sexy and exciting Nightshade allowed you to examine the human element John does so well.

Amanda's opening hallucinations seemed a little bizarre, though. Does swamp gas really cause trips like that?

Despite all this, my favorite scene was the psychiatrists' evaluation of new members. Glad to see Count Vertigo; one of my faves since battling Black Canary back in WORLD'S FINEST. Marnie showed every bit of the trauma and pain any decent person would after the events of Deadshot's mini-series, and his own shooting. Any chance of his return some day?

One more question: I've heard about the upcoming Batwoman mini-series. Will Bronze Tiger still be responsible for her post-Crisis death?

Finally, the inevitable request: how's about bringing in Golden Glider, Talia, and Catwoman?

Deejay Dayton
3-528 Aulneau Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2H 2V3
Canada

Denny O'Neil has created an all-new character, who was originally to be called Batwoman, but has since gained a newer, better name. And trust me, this babe has never even heard of Kathy Kane.

Of course there is always a chance we'll have Floyd back in these pages, but first he has some hard time at Arkham and some serious thinking to do.

Catwoman is a distinct possibility for later this year, having already cleared the use with Mr. O'Neil—it's a matter now of finding the right story.

*****

Dear Bob,

One of the best things about the comics business in '88 has been SUICIDE SQUAD, and #23 exemplified all the reasons why. "Weird War Tales," apart from being a great title for a story and a reminder of a great comic, was a great read. I wonder who exactly wrote what; all I could discern was John Ostrander's customary fluent scripting and pacing. I found myself getting a little annoyed with the action scenes, because they inter-

rupted the character interaction, and it's not often I criticize comics for the action! I do so enjoy John's handling of the Squad members, though, and the flashbacks to the Invasion battles, while necessary and well written, served to make me relish the "quiet" sequences all the more. The final panel of the issue was a pearl, by the way.

You kindly printed my letter in this issue, allowing me to make public my admiration of the McDonnell/Lewis art team. I stand by what I said, they were one of the most exciting pairings in comics. But so is the McDonnell/Kesel duo. Both Bob and Karl add a certain polish to Luke's pencils and I can't say that I prefer one over the other. I'm just happy that SS can boast some of the most impressive artwork currently on view.

With the Squad's problems rapidly coming to a head, 1989 looks like a crackerjack year for this comic, indeed. I'm looking forward to it.

Dale Coe
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Warrington, Cheshire WA5 1LR
England

John and Kim thoroughly discuss the issue's plot and page-by-page breakdown. From there, John writes down the pacing and then the two take turns polishing one another's draft. It was Kim, by the way, who came up with the new visual for Vixen's power. I'll gladly take credit for the final panel, though.

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Dear John,

Y'know, they say you don't miss something you've never had; well, I wish I'd never read SUICIDE SQUAD #23, now I'm gonna have to have you and Luke with mewhenever I start to talk to myself. Either that or carry a portable film projector, but I digress...

Now on to a subject I take very seriously: unrequited love. Contrary to popular belief, it does exist. I make this point because I fear you're going to do the "Etta Candy" story, with the Mari-Flo-Ben love triangle. I think Sam Kinison said it best: "We've all had somebody that came through our lives and made it hell; you, me, nobody likes to lose." I mean, sure it'd be great if everybody could get the person they wanted, but most times it just doesn't work out that way, and to say otherwise is unrealistic.

I liked the scene with Simon and Marnie; it got me to thinking who I'd like to see as members of the Squad. I like the idea of Shrike, but doesn't she look just a tad like Vixen? And how about Fastball, Calculator, Gizmo, Mammoth and Cannon and Saber. Oh, and have you noticed the Duchess hasn't uttered the phrase "useless mudball" in quite a while? Makes you wonder.

But the highpoint of the issue was... the mad pie thrower strikes again! In case no one else figured it out yet, let me spoil the surprise. The mad pie thrower is none other than ... Ambush Bug.

Donnie Matthews
Route 2 Box 209C
Ararat, VA 24053

Sorry to spoil your fun, but the mad pie thrower is not someone new to this series. Heh-heh.

*****

Dear Bob and everybody else,

I really enjoy your book. I do. And I'm very impressed with John's writing, especially in the DEADSHOT mini-series and WASTELAND, as well as SUICIDE SQUAD. His characters are extremely compelling, and his dialogue is always right on that good old proverbial money.

But.

Sometimes, just *some*times, and I don't know whose fault this is, he tells an almost exceedingly bad action segment. In the case of #23, it was the obligatory INVASION! tie-in. But obligatory is the key word; it simply did not belong in these pages, especially when so much else of the above-mentioned good stuff is happening around it.

As for that good stuff, though, well, what can I say except that John (a fellow Chicagoan) has indeed impressed me once again. I love the fact that there can be a whole heck of a lot of emotional complexity in a "team book." I do.

And, all right, I'll give you credit where credit is due regarding the obligatory crossover stuff. The scene with Boomer and Nemesis and the folks from Down Under was pretty durn funny. Then the scene between Nemesis and Nightshade was almost perfectly written. Yes, subtlety can and does exist in comics.

If only there wasn't that fight scene...

Anthony Rapp
1009 Gael Drive
Joliet, IL 60435

*****

Dear Editor,

C. Wayne Owens's pro-Amanda Waller letter in #23 bothered me, because that certainly wasn't what I see in the woman. Then I turned to the first four pages in the book and praise the Lord! John Ostrander is not blind to the grievous flaws of Amanda Waller. He struck all the right chords in bringing out what sometimes downright terrifies me about this woman. She's an obstinate ox who surrounds herself with top talent and then *refuses to listen*. Everything with her must be The Amanda Waller Show, with occasional bit players getting a word in. And as with Batman's charming way of running The Outsiders, all of the good people are close to open revolt. Remember, Amanda Waller is an *ex-housewife with few qualifications* who fast-talked her way into her current post. I think she's standing on a sand castle that should cave in any time now. A lot of the Squad's recent missions have been more for the good of Amanda Waller than for the good of the world. And while everybody else risks their lives, her main function is sitting home munching bon-bons from a sitting position. She takes none of the risks and gets all of the credit. I hope Marnie and LaGrieve do quit. It would serve Waller right. All she's interested in now is being able to sit behind the same big desk.

#23 was a strong issue, giving us delicious views of Duchess and Vixen tearing up the opposition; a look at some new members (looks like Dr. Light hasn't lost his ability to entertain); and romantic trouble for Ben Turner coming up—though if I were him, I'd pick Vixen, too. Is Flo the kid of Amanda Waller's sister? If so, we've got some big trouble coming. Nightshade is looking more beautiful with the Devil in her tummy, if that's possible—her new spook look makes her so exotic I can hardly stand it. I hope Nemesis will get a much-expanded role as the Squad changes—he's been grievously underused.

Charles D. Brown
39 Stockton Street
Brentwood, NY 11717

No, Flo is not related to Amanda or her sister Mary. Whatever gave you that idea?

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Next week we have *three* Janus Directive chapters. First, there's dire doings in FIRESTORM #86 as Killer Frost busts loose and LaGrieve receives an alert from Flo. This issue also introduces Tom Mandrake as that series' resident artist. Then, in MANHUNTER #14, Amanda pays Mark Shaw a visit and ropes him into the Directive as he tries to find out what happened to John and Cherie Chase (remember them from issue #27?). Finally, CHECKMATE! #18 gives us a glimpse of the organization out of touch and out of control with their Virginia HQ reduced to scrap metal. The answers are deadly.

And then, a week later, SQUAD #29 features an assault on Belle Reve from Checkmate and Peacemaker and Major Victory which must mean mayhem times three.

Remember to drop us your comments on this saga, root for the Mets, and keep smiling!

—Bob Greenberger